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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MARCH 2 SHARM AL-SHEIKH CONFERENCE - AUSTRIA

REF: STATE 14575

¶1. (C) MFA Middle East Director Amb. Ralph Scheide told Econ/Pol Counselor Feb. 19 that Austrian FM Spindelegger will attend the March 2 Sharm Al-Sheikh Conference and that Austria plans to make a noticeable contribution, which would be provided through UNRWA and the EU. As the cabinet had not yet endorsed the donation, Scheide did not want to reveal the likely sum. Scheide agreed that the focus of the conference should be on immediate humanitarian needs and that the Palestinian Authority should have the leading voice on behalf of the Palestinians and a leading role in providing the assistance.

¶2. (C) Scheide said that Austria agrees that long-term reconstruction and development will have to await reconciliation between Palestinian factions and added that, though western donors should not give up on the "three principles" (recognition of Israel, of previous agreements, and rejection of violence), if the Palestinians do achieve a unified administration, western donors should be "pragmatic" in dealing with it.

¶3. (C) Scheide also asked if it would be possible for the Austrian delegation to meet with a senior member of the U.S. delegation. The Austrians, he stressed, were not asking for a ministerial meeting.

KILNER